

The Great Woolen Industry of America

More Than Twelve Hundred Woolen Mills in the United States and Their Output

The Tariff and Conditions as They Are To-day

NINETY-FIVE out of every hundred of the American people who wear woolen clothing are clad in good fabrics from American mills. This short sentence sums up one of the most significant phases of American industrial activity.

Sixty years ago more than one-half of the American people were clad in woolen fabrics imported from abroad. Our population is nearly three times as large as it was in 1851, but the American wool manufacture has advanced far more swiftly than has the population. The total output of our woolen factories, which was \$73,000,000 in 1860, reached nearly \$500,000,000 in 1909, if carpets, hosiery, knit goods, etc., are included.

There are 1,200 woolen mills of all kinds in the United States. About three-fifths of the whole industry is located in New England, though the major part of the great domestic wool supply is brought from beyond the Mississippi River. The United States is far and away the greatest wool consuming country in the world. Its per capita consumption, which was 5.18 pounds in 1901, was 6.67 pounds in 1909. In 1910 the total production of American wool, practically all of it fine enough to use for clothing purposes, was \$21,000,000 pounds, and the imports of foreign wool were 252,000,000 pounds, of which 120,000,000 pounds were of the coarse Class III wools designed for carpet making and rug making. Of the 464,000,000 pounds of fine wools retained for consumption in 1910, 70 per cent. were American wools grown by American farmers and ranchmen.

American wool manufacturers draw on all the markets of the world for their necessary raw materials. The protective duty on raw wools of the first class is 11 cents and on wools of the second class 12 cents a pound. These are relatively high rates, but they are not prohibitive. They do not prevent our mills from securing whatever foreign wools they need for the blends essential to the making of certain fabrics. But the main reliance of American wool manufacturers is and always has been the sound, strong American-grown wool, the finer varieties of which are produced largely in the range of country southward from Ohio, including West Virginia, one of the finest pastoral and general agricultural regions in the world. The chief sources of American wools, however,

were \$21,000,000, probably displacing in this country about \$25,000,000 worth of American goods. These imported fabrics were bought and used chiefly by the small wealthy class—and, therefore, the tariff on woolen goods, as everybody in the trade knows, is in practical effect a tax on articles of voluntary use and luxury. It falls, as such taxation should, on those most competent to bear it.

Not even the very wealthy class need

in these woolen and worsted mills—not including carpet, felt, hosiery, knit goods and similar establishments—increased from 330,000,000 pounds in 1899 to 474,000,000 pounds in 1909, or 44 per cent.; reckoned on a scoured wool basis the increase was 50 per cent. This marks a prodigious expansion in the industry as a whole, and makes all the more significant the fact disclosed by the census inquiry, that the quantity of raw cotton consumed in these woolen

buy. But the national trait of thriftiness is manifested nowhere more markedly than in the selection of clothing. No people in the world are so well clad. Clothing may cost more here, but nowhere else do the average plain people have so wide a range of choice of well made, skilfully designed, becoming, durable garments.

The first thing that new come immigrants do on their arrival in this country is to discard the clothes which they have brought from the Old World in

Europe is different from that of the United States.

The sharpest kind of competition prevails in the manufacture of clothing, and the same is true of the manufacture of cloth. Once in a while a politician or a newspaper speaks of a so-called "woolen trust." There is no woolen trust or combination in America. Of the 1,200 woolen manufacturing establishments, more than 900 are devoted to the making of woolen and worsted fabrics for personal wear and use.

and the stockmen of the country have a right to share. American manufacturers pay higher wages to their operatives—wages twice as high as their competitors of England and more than twice as high as their competitors of the continent of Europe. Between 1897 and 1907 the average wages of woolen operatives in America, according to the Federal Bureau of Labor, increased 31 per cent.

A very interesting study of conditions

the great iron and steel industry a product of the protective tariff system. There was spasmodic and, as a rule, inadequate protection for this industry in the various tariff laws up to 1861. Wool was not a Southern product and, therefore, the industry received scant favor from the public men who were dominant in Congress from 1844 to the outbreak of the Civil War. During a part of this time wool manufactures were actually dutiable at the same ad valorem rate as the raw material of which they were composed. This policy was virtually dictated from Europe, with the eager assent of Southern politicians of the period, who feared and hated the manufacturing activities of the Northern States. The English manufacturers of Bradford wrote to Congress at this period remonstrating against any American protective duty on worsted fabrics, on the ground that these were not and could not be made in the United States—and Congress meekly assented to their preposterous demand. This was still the age of feeble provincialism in America.

It was the Civil War of 1861-1865 which created the woolen manufacture of this country as we now know it. The clothing of the huge Federal armies in strong, durable fabrics mightily stimulated the business of American mills—for the government of Lincoln was wise enough to recognize that it could no more depend upon Europe for the uniforms of its soldiers than it could for rifles and cannon, shot and shell. Even before the war, however, in the early spring of 1861, the first Morrill protective tariff act had provided a potent stimulus for the industry.

It has been the fortune or misfortune of the wool and woolen schedule to look higher for many years than any other portion of the tariff. The phrase "look higher" is used advisedly. Other great textile interests, silk and cotton, have their raw materials free of duty in the United States. The wool manufacturer, on the other hand, is required to pay a relatively high protective duty on the crude material of his art. For this high duty he must be and is compensated before he can be given any protection of his own. This is the factor that makes the average ad valorem duties on wool manufactures run up as high as 90 per cent. The actual, deliberate protection which it is intended that the mills shall receive is, how-



LARGEST WORSTED MILL IN THE WORLD.

Total length over 1,900 feet, width 311 feet, total floor space 1,300,000 square feet.

look to Europe for its woolen goods unless it prefers to do so in order to secure fabrics of peculiar type, a certain special "exclusive" character. The high quality and wide range of American woolen fabrics of to-day are frankly recognized the world over—so frankly that the most conspicuous importer of English cloths in New York city has lately said:

"There are no more expert manufacturers anywhere than the best of those in this country. They are wonderfully quick to catch ideas, to modify, alter, improve and to meet quickly the ever changing demands of fashion and fancy. They produce as great a variety of woolen cloths as can be found in the whole of Europe together."

"The fine and medium grades of the woolen cloths made here are generally better than those of equal quality to be obtained in any other country. American colors are, as a rule, better, clearer and more lasting than those of similar foreign made fabrics. The finishing talent in America is quite equal to any in Europe."

This eulogy of the efficiency and conscientiousness of American wool manufacturing is borne out by the exact statistical investigations of the Federal

and worsted mills decreased from 40,245,000 pounds to 29,055,000 pounds, or 50 per cent., while the amount of cotton yarn purchased increased only from 35,000,000 pounds to 39,000,000 pounds, or about 11 per cent., leaving as a net result "a decided decrease in the amount of cotton used as a material by wool manufacturers."

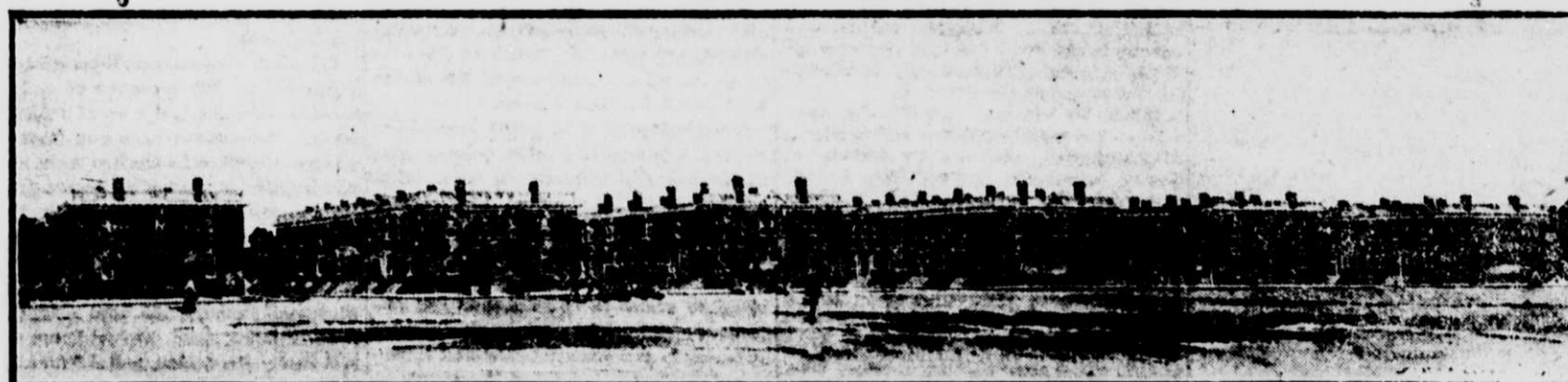
favor of attire made in the American fashion.

Closely associated with the American wool manufacture is that great distinctively national industry, the making of ready-to-wear clothing, which of late years has enlisted some of the ablest administrative and technical skill in the United States. The representative

Thirty-four of these mills, some of them large and some small, are included in the American Woolen Company, which, therefore, has almost 900 independent American competitors. The American Woolen Company does about one-ninth of the woolen and worsted manufacturing business of the United States. Its capital stock of \$40,000,000 is about one-

in the American textile manufacture has just been made by Professor William Davis of the Hawick Technical Institute of England. As to the workers Dr. Davis has this to say:

"America is good to the worker. He is a man of importance here. Much is expected of him and in return he secures wages much higher than at home.



AMERICAN WOOLEN COMPANY'S "NEW SETTLEMENT" OF ALL BRICK HOUSES AT LAWRENCE, MASS.

Moreover, "the figures also show a marked decrease in the use of shoddy. The quantity purchased decreased 35 per cent. The amount manufactured in a new industry in the last twenty or thirty years. They have almost absorbed the total amount of late command of the American market, shoddy consumed by woolen and their models and workmanship worsted manufacturers was 68,000,000

eight of the total capital invested in the industry. These exact figures are sufficient proof that the company, though a great and powerful concern, is very far from being a monopoly. Certainly not an excessive return from a calling subject to the peculiar vicissitudes of textile manufacture.

This has the effect of increasing his self-respect, he clothes himself better, he lives in a more roomy and convenient dwelling. . . . The bracing atmosphere has perhaps something to do with the unquenchable optimism of the American. He is never 'downhearted,' but after failure at once sets himself for



OPERATIVES' COTTAGE, WOOD WORSTED MILL, AMERICAN WOOLEN CO., LAWRENCE, MASS.



WOOD MILL RESTAURANT AT LAWRENCE, MASS.



TYPE OF OPERATIVES' HOUSES, AMERICAN WOOLEN CO., LAWRENCE, MASS.

are now the new and progressive Rocky Mountain States, Wyoming and Montana running a close race for supremacy.

American manufacturers hold their mastery of the great American market in the face of keen, incessant competition. Imports of wool manufactures in the year 1910 on the low foreign value-

Government. The Bureau of the Census, in its preliminary report of the decennial census of 1910, notes a very great decline in the use of shoddy and cotton, the chief substitutes for new wool in the manufacture of woolen and worsted fabrics in America. The quantity of wool consumed in condition purchased

pounds? In 1909 it was only 53,000,000 pounds, a decrease all the more significant when the growth of the industry is considered."

No people in the world are such exacting purchasers as the Americans. No people in the world have so much money on the average with which to

ready-to-wear American clothing industry has been built up almost entirely on the foundation of American-made woolen fabrics. It is peculiarly adapted to those fabrics, and it could not hope to secure an equivalent for them from foreign manufacturers. The whole organization of the clothing industry in

American woolen and worsted mills pay more money for both their domestic and foreign wools because of the protective tariff, designed to shield American wool growers. But there is no complaint about that. The manufacturers recognize that protection is a national policy in which the farmers

another determined try. He is broad-minded and impressed by the magnitude and resources of his country. He is kindly disposed toward emigrants of the right sort and is glad to have them make their home here."

The American wool manufacture of to-day is even more distinctively than

ever, no more than 50 or 55 per cent. ad valorem, or somewhat less than the highest protective rates accorded to manufacturers of cotton and silk. This is an important fact which many newspapers and even some distinguished public men in America do not seem to comprehend.